

Diabetes and Foot Care

Diabetes may cause you to have problems because of poor blood supply (*circulation*) to your feet and legs. This may cause the skin on your feet to become thinner, break easier, and heal more slowly. Your skin may become dry, and the skin may peel and crack. You may also have nerve damage in your legs and feet causing decreased feeling in them. You may not notice minor injuries to your feet that could lead to infections or more serious problems. Taking care of your feet is one of the most important things you can do for yourself.



HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Wear shoes at all times, even in the house. **Do not** go barefoot. Bare feet are easily injured.
- Check your feet daily for blisters, cuts, and redness. If you cannot see the bottom of your feet, use a mirror or ask someone for help.
- Wash your feet with warm water (**do not** use hot water) and mild soap. Then pat your feet and the areas between your toes until they are completely dry. **Do not** soak your feet as this can dry your skin.
- Apply a moisturizing lotion or petroleum jelly (that does not contain alcohol and is unscented) to the skin on your feet and to dry, brittle toenails. **Do not** apply lotion between your toes.
- Trim your toenails straight across. **Do not** dig under them or around the cuticle. File the edges of your nails with an emery board or nail file.
- **Do not** cut corns or calluses or try to remove them with medicine.
- Wear clean socks or stockings every day. Make sure they are not too tight. **Do not** wear knee-high stockings since they may decrease blood flow to your legs.
- Wear shoes that fit properly and have enough cushioning. To break in new shoes, wear them for just a few hours a day. This prevents you from injuring your feet. Always look in your shoes before you put them on to be sure there are no objects inside.
- **Do not** cross your legs. This may decrease the blood flow to your feet.
- If you find a minor scrape, cut, or break in the skin on your feet, keep it and the skin around it clean and dry. These areas may be cleansed with mild soap and water. **Do not** cleanse the area with peroxide, alcohol, or iodine.
- When you remove an adhesive bandage, be sure not to damage the skin around it.
- If you have a wound, look at it several times a day to make sure it is healing.
- **Do not** use heating pads or hot water bottles. They may burn your skin. If you have lost feeling in your feet or legs, you may not know it is happening until it is too late.
- Make sure your health care provider performs a complete foot exam at least annually or more often if you have foot problems. Report any cuts, sores, or bruises to your health care provider immediately.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have an injury that is not healing.
- You have cuts or breaks in the skin.
- You have an ingrown nail.
- You notice redness on your legs or feet.
- You feel burning or tingling in your legs or feet.
- You have pain or cramps in your legs and feet.
- Your legs or feet are numb.
- Your feet always feel cold.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is increasing redness, swelling, or pain in or around a wound.
- There is a red line that goes up your leg.
- Pus is coming from a wound.
- You develop a fever or as directed by your health care provider.
- You notice a bad smell coming from an ulcer or wound.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.